

focus } Houston and Beyond

GREAT THINGS ABOUT GREATER HOUSTON.

The world's largest medical center and the world's largest rodeo. Hundreds of haute cuisine restaurants and thousands of ethnic food eateries. Houston and its surrounding metros present with countless faces, which is exactly what makes the area so great. »

DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE

The **Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau** reports that 9.2 million visitors enjoy the Bayou City's cultural events and exhibitions annually. The **George R. Brown Convention Center** brings many of those visitors downtown to discover the theaters, restaurants and entertainment flourishing there.

At **Discovery Green**, a 12-acre landscaped oasis in the city center, there are festivals, live music events and a weekly Farmer's Market. And during the winter months, ice skating! From November 22 to February 2, the recycled water from Kinder Lake becomes a 7,716 square-foot ice skating surface, the largest outdoor skating rink in the Southwest. All ages are welcome.



KATYA HORNER

CULTURE With a large and impressive museum district—along with hundreds of art galleries and historic collections—Houston's art scene is a masterwork that's constantly in the making.

Through March 23, the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** presents *Scenes from the Stone Age: The Cave Paintings of Lascaux*. The World Heritage site in France showcases paintings by our prehistoric ancestors who recorded their stories on the cave walls. Now we—their descendants—can learn something about their daily lives.

Another visually compelling example of the way art reflects life is at the **Asia Society of Texas**. Through February 9, two complimentary exhibits depict the changing roles of rural women in Southeast Asia. Through powerful videos, weavers and batik artists talk about creating stunningly detailed textiles while visitors can view several of those pieces on display.

SPORTS Houston has the Texans, the Dynamo, the Astros and the Rockets—but those aren't the only professional athletes in town. The **Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo** annually draws hundreds of cowboys and cowgirls to what is the largest professional rodeo event in the world.

Attracting record crowds—2.5 million attendees in 2013—the rodeo holds dozens of competitive events while awarding millions of dollars in scholarship funds to deserving Houston students. Tickets go on sale in January for the March 4-23 event, so saddle up and lasso yours early.

THE BAY AREA Driving south from Houston to the **Bay Area**, cast your eyes on the water to see sailboats and seabirds around the **Kemah Boardwalk**, or look up to the sky to learn about mankind's adventures in space—past, present and future—at **Space Center Houston**.

One of the newest exhibits at the Center—*Leonardo da Vinci Machines in Motion*—brings the incredible designs of this Renaissance-era genius to life for visitors to study and set in motion.

SUGAR LAND Built by dreamers who made their fortunes in gold, **Sugar Land** has prospered for more than 150 years because of sugar cane. Join the Sugar Land Heritage Hike on January 11 to learn the history of how the Imperial Sugar Company helped shape this still-growing city. Then stick around until January 31 when the **Sugar Cane Imperials**—the region's only 3HL ice hockey team—take on the McKinney Warriors at the Sugar Land Ice and Sports Center. ■



KIM MCLEAN



HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO